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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, July 8, 1931.

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(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Home-Made Fears." From articles by Albert Edward Wiggam, appearing in the magazines, "Better Homes and Gardens" and "The Reader's Digest." Approved by the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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Once upon a time there were two parents named Adam and Eve, who reared two sons, named Cain and Abel. They made a moral success of one boy and a moral failure of the other. That's an old story, but it has been repeated down through the ages to the present day. Some characters have been strongly built; others have been weakened and warped.

What are the factors or agencies that determine a child's character and the emotional tone of his life, and, therefore, his success? Parents have asked this question through the years. Today, with the recent science of psychology as a guide, both parents and scientists have become interested in finding out whether home, school, church, movies, clubs and other organizations, sports or other factors have the greatest influence in developing those habits that make boys and girls into self-reliant men and women, able to meet an imperfect world with high ideals of their own.

Light has recently been thrown on this question by a study made by two psychologists--one from Columbia and one from Yale University, who have tested the character attitudes of over 10,000 school children with ages ranging from about 8 to 16 years old, under normal school and home conditions. The children, of course did not know they were being studied. The net result of these intricate and reliable tests was to show that the home has five times as much influence as all the outside agencies combined.

Let us then take a look at the way in which home life, or the attitudes between different members of the family, foster that one emotional attitude that affects our lives more than any other and expands as a sort of background through nearly all the others. This is self-confidence as opposed to fear--not fear of some special thing, but a rather generalized fear of life itself.

Many people, who will face death on a moment's notice, who go through all sorts of real dangers without a quaver, have yet a sort of underlying fear of life's possibilities that seldom leaves them. It is easy to fall into these generalized fears, and there are thousands of ways in which parents actually teach this state of mind to their children.

What is fear anyhow? Well, the scientists have done a world of work in the last 30 years on fear and they find that there are three distinct kinds. The first is natural or biological fear--the kind that preserves you from natural perils; the second is intelligent or constructive fear--the kind you get from sound, healthful education; and the third is pathological fear--destructive fear that comes from a wrong view of life, from wrong



comparisons of yourself with other people, from wrong attitudes toward your job, and from telling yourself constantly that you are not as important as others.

Now here is where the home and the people in the home have such an important influence. As a rule there are just three people who ever tell you you are no good--your parents, your brothers or sisters, and yourself. And, nine times out of ten, you have begun to tell yourself you are no good because your mother or father or brother or sister in some way first destroyed your self-confidence.

For example, you hear many people assert that they are naturally afraid of lightning or burglars or something of the sort. This is not true, because there are but two things that people are naturally afraid of. The first is a loud noise and the second is the sense of falling. Dr. John B. Watson and his students have tried in hundreds of ways to frighten very young babies but these are the only two ways they have ever succeeded.

Many mothers tell me, "My child has always been afraid of the dark." Oh, no, he was taught to be afraid of the dark. Perhaps he was put to bed and then someone went out and slammed the door, or talked loudly, or scolded or dropped something on the floor. Or, when he got a little older, you talked about being afraid of the dark yourself, or told the child something dreadful that was likely to happen in the dark.

And it is in just this way that you teach children to be afraid of life. Shielding the children from responsibility and protecting them from life teaches them to fear it. Parents who do this are missing the greatest educational opportunity this world offers when they fail to put as much responsibility on the child as he can reasonably carry just as early in life as is possible. In this way you build up habits of success instead of habits of failure, courage habits instead of habits of fearing life and dodging its responsibilities.

This has nothing contrary to the duty of teaching children the second kind of fear--intelligent fear--which is merely teaching them good judgment in avoiding dangers and destructive habits. This kind of fear is merely the negative side of character building and should be carried through to the constructive or positive side--that is, to the development of ideals and ambitions, of goals to be reached and battles to be won. The greatest duty of parents is to fill their children's minds with the belief that they can meet these duties and battles with satisfaction and success.

When intelligent fear is carried to the point of exaggeration, it becomes the third kind of fear--diseased or pathological. I know a woman who has gone through all sorts of real dangers--surgical operations, a fire, even running a burglar out of the house with a gun--and yet her life is just one long agony of fear as to what the neighbors will think of her. She is afraid she is not as good as they are in one way or another. And the worst of it is that she has taught her children these same attitudes.

The way out is to develop logical judgment of our own powers and those of our friends. When this is done honestly, when you think in detail of your own powers of body and mind and compare them with these same qualities in others, you will be astonished to find that you are superior in most respects



to the very people you have taught yourself to be afraid of.

But the great lesson is that all these attitudes, both destructive and constructive, are chiefly developed in the home. A study issued by the University of Chicago, of over 60,000 delinquents and criminals, has shown that nearly all this wayward conduct is the outgrowth of emotional trends taught in the home. And, since we have seen that Nature has given us but two inborn fears, and that all others are learned, and since the home is the greatest agency in the world for teaching all our emotional attitudes, it seems to me the very largest question every family should answer is this: "Are we, as parents or brothers and sisters, teaching ourselves and one another to meet life with fear, self-depreciation and doubt? Or are we trying to be a daily inspiration to one another to meet life with the self-confidence and good cheer that calls out each one's best energies?"

Your answer to these questions will have more effect on the happiness and success of every member of your family than anything that has been or ever will be taught in school or college.

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A meal in just three parts for the children today. Main dish and main course all in one. The meat and the vegetables are cooked together in a casserole of beef with vegetables.

Have you your pencils ready?

Let's write this good and simple menu.

Casserole of Beef with Vegetables; Banana and Lettuce Salad; and for dessert, Blackberry Flummery.

I've always loved that word flummery ever since I was a child. And the dessert is just as delightful as the name.

Five ingredients:

2 cups of blackberry juice, from either canned or cooked fresh blackberries  
1/2 cup of sugar (if you are using unsweetened juice)  
3 tablespoons of cornstarch  
1/4 teaspoon of salt  
2 tablespoons of lemon juice  
Better check now to see if you have every one of those ingredients correct.  
(Repeat)

Heat the blackberry juice in a double boiler. Add the sugar, cornstarch and salt, which have been thoroughly mixed. Stir until the mixture thickens. Cover and cook for 15 to 20 minutes. Remove from the stove, add the lemon juice and beat well. Pour the mixture into a serving dish and chill. Serve with plain or whipped cream.

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Tomorrow we'll talk about getting rid of some insect pests in the house. If you have ants in your kitchen, there will be some helpful information for you, straight from the scientists at Washington who have been studying these small nuisances.

